

Message Text

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SUBJ: NORTH KOREA-AFGHANISTAN SIGN AIR AGREEMENT

1. ON JANUARY 7, THE GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN AND THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLES'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA SIGNED A RECIPROCAL CIVIL AVIATION AGREEMENT. THE AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED BY DR. ABDUL KHALIZ, VICE PRESIDENT AFGHAN AIR AUTHORITY AND TOURISM FOR AFGHANISTAN, AND BY KIM BONG JE, NORTH KOREAN CHARGE IN KABUL (LI SUNG JIN, REPRESENTING NORTH KOREAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY --"CHOSAN MINHANG"-- WAS ALSO PRESENT). IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THIS AGREEMENT, WHICH REPORTEDLY USES "STANDARD ICAO LANGUAGE," THE TWO-MAN NORTH KOREAN TEAM ENTERED INTO NEGOTIATIONS WITH ARIANA FOR A TECHNICAL AGREEMENT, SPECIFYING RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES, ASSIGNING EACH OTHER AS GENERAL SALES AGENTS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES, SPECIFYING POINTS FOR TECHNICAL LANDING RIGHTS, AND PROVIDING TERMS OF REIMBURSEMENT FOR ANY MONIES EARNED FOR THE OTHER'S ACCOUNT. THESE NEGOTIATIONS WERE CONCLUDED, AND THE KOREANS DEPARTED, JANUARY 1.

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2. THE AGREEMENTS PROVIDE EACH AIRLINES WITH OVERFLIGHTS AND TECHNICAL STOP RIGHTS, AS WELL AS LANDING RIGHTS AT KABUL AND POYONGYANG. "CHOSAN MINHANG" CURRENTLY HAS A WEEKLY FLIGHT FROM PYONGYANG-PEKING-MOSCOW, AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES REPORT THAT THEY WILL CONSIDER A PYONGYANG-PEKING-URUMCHI-KABUL FLIGHT, BUT NOT AT THE PRESENT TIME. MOREOVER, THE NORTH KOREANS REPORT THEY HAVE A CIVIL AGREEMENT WITH AUSTRIA, AND IF THEY COMMENCE FLIGHTS TO AUSTRIA, WILL OVERFLY AFGHANISTAN WITH OR WITHOUT A STOP ON THAT ROUTE. ARIANA HAS NOT INTENTION OF FLYING TO PYONGYANG, BUT WILL FIND OVERFLIGHT RIGHTS USEFUL IF AND WHEN IT INSTITUTES A KABUL-PEKING-TOKYO AIR ROUTE.

3. ACCORDING TO THE NORTH KOREANS, THEY WILL BE FLYING TU-154S AND IL-18S ON THE KABUL ROUTE, IF INSTITUTED. THEY PROVIDED NO OTHER INFORMATION ON THE COMPOSITION AND SIZE OF THEIR FLEET.

4. THE RUMOUR AT ARIANA IS THAT THIS AGREEMENT WAS INITIATED BY THE NORTH KOREANS, IN RESPONSE TO THEIR INFORMATION THAT SOUTH KOREA WAS ABOUT TO SIGN SUCH AN AGREEMENT WITH AFGHANISTAN. CHARLES BENNETT, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF ARIANA, STATES THAT ARIANA WILL BE MUCH MORE INTERESTED IN AN AGREEMENT WITH SOUTH KOREA AND WOULD PLAN TO ADD A SEOUL STOP ON THEIR PLANNED PEKING-TOKYO ROUTE IF SUCH AN AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED. THE ARIANA PEOPLE WERE SURPRISED THAT THE "CHOSAN MINHANG" TEAM SEEMED TO HAVE LITTLE FAMILIARITY WITH AIRLINE TECHNICAL TERMS AND STANDARD LANGUAGE FOR AGREEMENTS. (WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN A TEXT OF THE AGREEMENT BUT HAVE NOT YET BEEN SUCCESSFUL.)

5. ACCORDING TO ROK AMBASSADOR CHOI, AGREEMENT HAS VERY LITTLE PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE BUT, RATHER, REFLECTS THE NORTH KOREAN PENCHANT FOR ARRANGING ACCORDS -- USEFUL OR NOT -- WITH OTHER COUNTRIES. CHOI ALSO SAID THAT ALTHOUGH ROK WAS INTERESTED IN A RECIPROCAL AGREEMENT WITH THE AFGHANS, NEGOTIATIONS HAD NOT YET BEGUN. AT PRESENT, THE SOUTH KOREANS WERE MORE INTERESTED IN CONCLUDING LINKS WITH THE IRANIANS ESPECIALLY CONCERNING THE SINGAPORE-TEHRAN ROUTE.

ELIOT

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